



UPWARD BOUND

Bible Lesson Curriculum

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“...that at the name of
Jesus every knee should
bow... and every tongue
confess that Jesus Christ is
Lord, to the glory of God
the Father.”

Philippians 2:10–11

INTRODUCTION

Onward and upward, backpackers! This week at Upward Bound we will follow our Lead Guide Jesus as he shows us that the way up is actually down. Following the trail of Philippians 2, we'll learn of Jesus' surprising birth, humble childhood, obedient life, painful death, glorious resurrection and joy-filled ascension. We will explore this great paradox of the Christian life, that the path to honor is actually a path of humility. We will learn why Jesus is exalted and honored above all. And together we will more deeply discover the greatness of our Savior Jesus who willingly gave up His position and privilege to rescue us from sin and death to restore us to unbroken fellowship with Himself.

Introduction to Upward Bound

Probably no biblical story is more familiar to children than the story of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And yet, though the story is familiar, it is often less real to children, less likely to move them to respond than other stories they know. Frequently, fairy tales are told better and more creatively to children than is the life of Jesus. But this should not be so. Children will come out of childhood with an idea, an image of Jesus Christ, often based on impressions, rather than concrete thinking. The real Jesus comes to us through His Word and through the careful enlightening of our minds and imaginations through the use of the Word by His Spirit. Our purpose in Upward Bound is to give each child a truer, more realistic picture of Jesus Christ in order that he or she might fall more deeply in love with Him and trust Him more fully.

When we think of this, though, we at once realize the awesomeness of the task. In many ways this is the most difficult story to present well, creatively, freshly, and in a balanced fashion. No final words of explanation can be written about Jesus Christ. He is the infinite and the finite. He is the mystery of God. He is the truth undiscoverable except by revelation. That which human wisdom cannot plan must necessarily be beyond its power to perfectly understand. There are secret things which belong to the Lord and there are revealed things which God has made plain so that they may be understood by us and the children (Deuteronomy 29:29). We need to ask the Holy Spirit to enable us to understand the revelation of Jesus, the Eternal Word, He who stooped from the position of an infinite expression to the limitations of human life.

It is a precious assignment to so proclaim the character and life of Jesus Christ as revealed in Scripture. If we would know Jesus truly, if we would take the time to read His Word and those books that develop our understanding according to His Word, if we would continually beg God to make Him known to us as He truly is, not one of us would be able to resist Him. Let us see Jesus, then. Let us get to know Him better and let us make sure that not a child leaves our ministry without a clearer idea of who Jesus really is.



LOOK ONLINE
for additional resources (music, artwork, and publicity information) are available on the Upward Bound portal. Talk to your Director for more information or visit: portal.reachoutadventures.com

¹John C. Ryle, Train Up A Child In The Way He Should Go, "The Duties of Parents," (Christian Heritage Publisher, 1983) 11.

Foundational Perspective

It is our commitment, as much as possible, to teach the whole counsel of God. It is neither necessary nor appropriate to unduly simplify or neglect certain truths of the Scripture with children. Rather, in a straightforward manner, the deeper doctrines should be presented also. The venerable Bishop J.C. Ryle spoke to this issue in his discourse on the duties of parents:

See that they read it all (the Bible). You need not shrink from bringing any doctrine before them. You need not fancy that the leading doctrines of Christianity are things which children cannot understand. Children understand far more of the Bible than we are apt to suppose.

- ✿ Tell them of sin, its guilt, its consequences, its power, its vileness: you will find they can comprehend something of this.
- ✿ Tell them of the Lord Jesus Christ and His work for our salvation—the atonement, the cross, the blood, the sacrifice, the intercession: you will discover there is something not beyond them in all this.
- ✿ Tell them of the work of the Holy Spirit in man's heart, how He changes, and renews, and sanctifies, and purifies: you will soon see they can go along with you in some measure in this. In short, I suspect we have no idea how much a little child can take in of the length and breadth of the glorious Gospel. They see far more of these things than we suppose.
- ✿ Fill their minds with Scripture. Let the Word dwell in them richly. Give them the Bible, the whole Bible, even while they are young.

Finally, it is important to emphasize the significance of the role of the Bible Lesson Storyteller in tying together all of Upward Bound, its overall themes and truths. As stated in the Teacher Guide, the Bible Lesson Curriculum is the single most important aspect of Upward Bound and its central focus. Its themes are woven through each aspect of the VBS day, bringing meaning and purpose to every activity. May the young Backpackers of Upward Bound be taught of Jesus Christ as they are taught the profound truths of these lessons from His life.

As you prepare to teach, remember that this is God's Word, not yours or mine. May our prayer be that our message will be a "demonstration of the Spirit and of power [...] that [their] faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God (1 Corinthians 2:4-5)."

**FOLLOW CHRIST
TO THE SUMMIT!**

Before You Begin

Set aside a specific period of time to read through all of the Scripture passages and Bible lesson material, preferably in one sitting. Such an overview provides an invaluable sense of the curriculum's total picture and establishes a clear framework from which to teach.

Prayer

The importance of prayer cannot be overstated. The Lord is eager to give the ability to teach, the enthusiasm and creativity to do the teaching well, and even the words that will be on the tongue. But He is also eager that His children faithfully ask Him for His presence and help.

Lesson Format

For each lesson you will find: 1) the title; 2) the storytelling character; 3) the Scripture reference; 4) the main theme; 5) a story summary and outline; 6) teacher notes; 7) story.

Though the lessons are provided in a word-for-word format, it will be important for you to gear your presentation to your audience, both in your choice of the amount of content to cover, and in making specific lesson applications.

Lesson Material

It is so true that the more fully something is understood, the more easily it can be put into profound terms while being simply and briefly taught. With that in mind, additional material has been included with each lesson to aid you in your understanding and portrayal of the story.

Storytelling Character

History comes alive for children as they listen to an imaginary eyewitness account. As a Storyteller, you will increase the children's anticipation, excitement, and interest in the lessons as you capture their imagination and help them realize that these events took place in real history with real people. Try to take on the character of the Storyteller, telling the events of the story in the first person, according to his or her personality and life-context. Alternative characters have also been included for each story to provide flexibility for your setting.

Lesson Application

Though application ideas are provided with each lesson, the job of making practical application specific to the lives of the children you teach rests with you. It will be very important to think carefully about the personal issues and questions facing each different class and to prepare your lessons accordingly. Age-appropriate lesson applications are also very important. Though the main body of each lesson is essentially the same for all grade levels, the concerns of a 4-year-old are different than an 11-year-old. You will want to give prayerful consideration to how to best speak to the different ages you will teach.



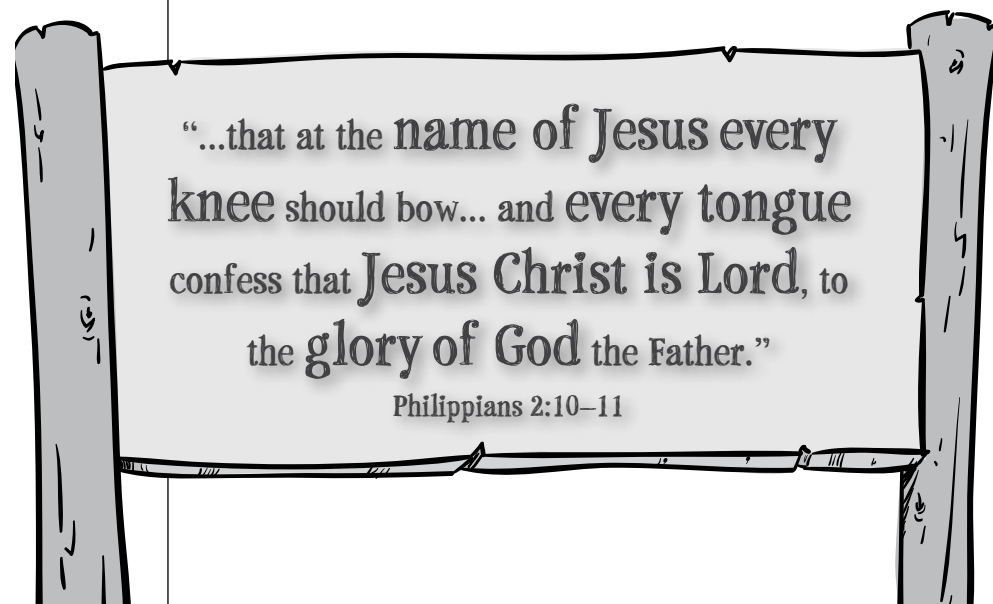


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It is also important to consider whether your children come from Christian or non-Christian homes. This knowledge will enable you to choose your words carefully as you speak about the Gospel. You will want to help Christian children understand that believing the Gospel is not only necessary for salvation, but is needed moment by moment in our Upward Bound journey of faith. Likewise, you will want children who have not yet believed to understand that to be Upward Bound, they need to put their faith in Jesus Christ and his work on the cross, confessing Him as Lord.

Finally, you will notice the potential for you to give the Gospel message every day and an invitation to the children to trust in Jesus Christ. You will, therefore, need to be particularly sensitive to the specific children you are teaching. Pray for the Holy Spirit's leading and discernment of their spiritual condition and responsiveness to the truth, to know when the Spirit wants you to present the Gospel more fully and to invite their response. You do not need to belabor the invitation of the Gospel to the point that the children tire of it early in the week; the message is meant to be laid out in fuller detail with each successive day. Trust the Spirit's leading.



Storytelling Character Costume Suggestions

Refer to the Storytelling Character section at the beginning of each lesson for a more complete description of the following characters.

Lesson 1: *The Angel Gabriel or John the Baptist's parents, Zechariah or Elizabeth*

Angel (a military messenger):

- White floor-length robe or tunic
- Gold tie belt (cording or fabric)
- Gold battle gear: breastplate, sword belt or bow and arrow, helmet, etc.
- Wings (shaped using gold garland or cardboard spray-painted gold)
- Sandals

Zechariah or Elizabeth

- Follow suggestions listed below for Mary and Joseph
- Add gray wig and or beard

Lesson 2: *Mary, the mother of Jesus, or Joseph, Jesus' earthly father*

Ancient Israelite woman:

- loose-fitting, floor-length dress tied at waist with long, colorful scarf or sash
- large matching or coordinating scarf or square of fabric, draped over head and secured with a narrow band, bobby pins, or hair comb
- sandals

Ancient Israelite man:

- beard (optional)
- long robe with belt
- Israelite headdress, secured with band
- sandals

Lesson 3: *Gilead the Gecko*

A desert lizard:

Create a large hooded jumpsuit as follows—

- Using white nylon tricot, make a loose-fitting hooded jumpsuit: tapered ankles and wrist, zippered front.
- Attach lengths of 1/4" foam "ribs" to inside of jumpsuit to create body shape.
- Use baseball cap to give shape to hood, and blackened tennis balls to form eyes.
- Make attachable tail out of tricot fabric, giving shape with a strip of 1/2" foam.
- Stuff with packing peanuts.
- Paint spots using fabric paints.

OR



Know Your Audience

We want to underscore the importance of knowing your audience, particularly regarding whether or not they are children from Christian homes. This knowledge will enable you to choose your words carefully as you speak about the Gospel. You will want to help Christian children understand that believing the Gospel is not only necessary for salvation, but is needed moment by moment in our Upward Bound journey of faith. Likewise you will want children who have not yet believed to understand that to be Upward Bound, they need to put their faith in Jesus Christ and His work on the cross, confessing Him as Lord.

Create a lizard outfit by wearing—

- fitted long sleeve shirt; green, brown, or orange
- leggings or joggers; green, brown, or orange
- fitted head covering; green, brown, or orange
- a tail; green, brown, or orange
- gloves; green, brown, or orange
- paint face to match outfit

Lesson 4: Simon of Cyrene

1st-century North African:

- Brightly colored robe/tunic with sash
- Turban-style headdress
- Dark beard
- Sandals

1st-century North African woman:

- Brightly colored robe/tunic with sash
- Large matching or coordinating scarf or square of fabric, draped over head and secured with a narrow band, bobby pins, or hair comb
- Jewelry- earrings, bangle bracelets, chains or long beaded necklaces
- Sandals

Lesson 5: Mary Magdalene or Peter

Ancient Israelite woman:

- Follow suggestions listed above for Mary, using more brightly colored robe, headdress

Ancient Israelite man:

- Follow suggestions listed above for Joseph



The Surprising Journey

Born in the Likeness of Men



MAIN THEME:

In the most wonderful and surprising journey ever taken, God the Son purposed with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit to leave the glories of Heaven to become a little baby in this broken world to rescue sinful people.



SCRIPTURE

Luke 1:26-38, 2:1-7

RELATED SCRIPTURE

Luke 2:8-40; Matthew 1:18-25, 2:16-18; Philippians 2:5-11

Story Summary:

Gabriel leads the backpackers to the truths of the Christmas story and the wonders of the Incarnation on an unexpected path. Beginning with the story of the Fall, then going further back to God's eternal plan to save a people for Himself. He then recounts the surprising story of Jesus' humble birth.

Story Outline:

Introduction

- Each person is on an Earthly Bound or Upward Bound Journey.
- Jesus made the most difficult and surprising Upward Bound Journey possible when he left the glories of Heaven to become a human in this broken world.
- Jesus did this to rescue sinful people and make their Upward Bound Journey possible.

The Reason Jesus Made the Surprising Journey: The Fall

- God created the world good.
- Adam and Eve lived in loving relationship with God, each other, and the world.
- Adam and Eve disbelieved God and disobeyed Him.
- Their sin ruined everything, and they could not fix it.

God already had a plan to rescue His people.

- Before Adam and Eve sinned, and even before Creation, God had already decided to save people from their sin and Satan's power.
- God the Father would send His son, Jesus, to become man so that he could take the punishment and death humans deserved because of sin. Jesus would live a completely righteous life in the place of humans.
- When Jesus took on a human body, He was changed forever. He will always be God and man.

CHARACTER:

Gabriel the Angel

ALTERNATIVE CHARACTER:

Zechariah or Elizabeth, the parents of John the Baptist

In thinking about this lesson and the truths to be taught, we can so quickly feel inadequate to the task. To describe something of the Son of God leaving the Courts of Heaven to enter the womb of Mary feels a bit like "rushing in where angels fear to tread." And so it is exactly that. But we must remember that this is God's truth and not ours. He has had the "audacity" to become one of us, and so we need not hesitate to tell the Good News to the generations following.